

Message Text

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ACTION OES-06

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 IO-13 ISO-00 FEA-01 ACDA-07 CIAE-00
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-07 NRC-05 DODE-00 EUR-12
/073 W

----- 012943 /14

R 151630Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5989
INFO USMISSION IAEA VIENNA
USERDA HQ WASHDC
USERDA HQ GERMANTOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 14499

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: IAEA, TECH, PARM, VE
SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN REQUEST FOR ENRICHED URANIUM FUEL

REF: (1) STATE 288881 (2) STATE 268344

1. SUMMARY. EMBASSY DISCUSSED SUBJECT REQUEST WITH OFFICIALS OF NATIONAL NUCLEAR COUNCIL (CONAN), WHO PROVIDED COPY OF RECENT OFFICIAL REQUEST FOR FUEL WHICH THEY BELIEVE CONTAINS ALL REQUIRED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY DISCUSSED REQUEST BY VENEZUELAN INSTITUTE FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (IVIC) FOR ENRICHED URANIUM FUEL WITH OFFICIALS OF VENEZUELA'S NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NUCLEAR INDUSTRY (CONAN). CONAN HAS GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR OVERSEEING NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES IN VENEZUELA AND IS SPECIFICALLY CHARGED WITH ADVISING THE GOV ON RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR ORGANIZATION, PROPOSING RULES FOR THE ACQUISITION OF MATERIALS, AND DEVELOPING SAFEGUARD PROVISIONS.

3. CONAN EXECUTIVE SECRETARY CAPT. JESUS TABORDA EXPLAINED THAT THE INITIAL REQUEST BY IVIC, WHICH HE SAID WENT TO VARIOUS POTENTIAL SUPPLIERS INCLUDING IAEA AND GOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE SUPPLIERS IN GERMANY AND FRANCE AS WELL AS THE US, REPRESENTED ONLY THE FIRST STEP IN THE PROCESS OF OBTAINING THE NEEDED FUEL. HE SAID CONAN WAS NOW TAKING THE SECOND STEP BY MAKING AN OFFICIAL REQUEST TO THE IAEA FOR ASSISTANCE
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IN OBTAINING THIS FUEL. NOTING THAT THE PRICES AT WHICH

FUEL HAD BEEN OFFERED WERE VERY HIGH, HE SAID HE AT LEAST WAS GOING TO TRY TO OBTAIN THE FUEL AT NO COST THROUGH THE IAEA. SINCE IAEA DID NOT HAVE SUCH MATERIAL OF ITS OWN, HE EXPECTED IT WOULD IN FACT COME FROM THE US, AND THAT THIS WOULD REQUIRE A TRILATERAL AGREEMENT AMONG THE INTERESTED PARTIES.

4. EMBOFF EXPLAINED TO TABORDA THAT INITIAL IVIC REQUEST TO USG HAD RESULTED IN SOME SPECIFIC QUESTIONS BECAUSE OF HIGH DEGREE OF ENRICHMENT INVOLVED, AND THAT FURTHER INFORMATION ON THESE POINTS WOULD BE HELPFUL IN EVALUATING THE OFFICIAL REQUEST. AFTER REVIEWING THE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS AS GIVEN IN REF. 1, TABORDA SAID THESE POINTS WOULD ALL BE COVERED IN HIS LETTER TO IAEA, WHICH HE WAS IN THE PROCESS OF WRITING. HE SUBSEQUENTLY PROVIDED A COPY OF THIS LETTER; COPIES ARE BEING POUCHED TO OES/NET IN DEPARTMENT AND US MISSION IAEA, VIENNA.

5. LETTER, DATED DEC. 3 AND ADDRESSED TO MR. SIGVARD EKLUND, IAEA, REQUESTS ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING 2900 GRAMS OF 93 PERCENT ENRICHED URANIUM FOR FABRICATION OF 20 FUEL ELEMENTS FOR RV-1 REACTOR. REQUESTED MATERIAL WOULD BE USED TO CONTINUE PROJECT DESCRIBED IN IAEA DOCUMENT INFCIRC 238 AND WOULD BE HANDLED IN ACCORD WITH THAT DOCUMENT'S PROVISIONS. THE LETTER STATES THAT A GIFT OF THE MATERIAL WOULD BE PREFERRED AND IF POSSIBLE IT SHOULD BE PROVIDED DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 1977. IT ALSO STATES THAT DISCUSSIONS ARE UNDERWAY WITH THE SPANISH NUCLEAR ENERGY BOARD FOR THE FABRICATION OF THE FUEL ELEMENTS, AND GIVES INFORMATION ON THE PRESENT STATUS OF FUEL USED IN THE RV-1 REACTOR TO DATE.

6. TABORDA EXPLAINED THAT HIGHLY ENRICHED FUEL IS BEING REQUESTED BECAUSE IT IS MORE READILY AVAILABLE, LESS EXPENSIVE ON A UNIT BASIS AND MORE ECONOMICAL TO USE. HE SAID HE CONSIDERED THE REFERENCE IN THE PRESENT US-VENEZUELAN ATOMIC ENERGY AGREEMENT TO 20 PERCENT ENRICHED FUEL TO BE OUT OF DATE, SINCE SUCH FUEL IS NOT GENERALLY STOCKED AND THUS MUST BE SPECIAL ORDERED, AND IS ALSO MORE EXPENSIVE TO USE.

7. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH TABORDA, WE DID NOT RAISE QUESTIONS OF NPT SAFEGUARDS OR POSSIBILITY OF INCLUDING BILATERAL CONFIDENTIAL

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AGREEMENT ON SAFEGUARDS AS PART OF TRILATERAL AGREEMENT WITH IAEA. IN DISCUSSING ANOTHER MATTER, HOWEVER, THAT OF UPCOMING VISIT BY ERDA-NRC TEAM TO DISCUSS PHYSICAL SECURITY REQUIREMENTS (REF 2) TABORDA WAS VERY SENSITIVE WITH RESPECT TO FACT THAT THIS VISIT WOULD INVOLVE DISCUSSIONS AND NOT "INSPECTION", SINCE LATTER WAS RESPONSIBILITY OF IAEA ALONE.
VAKY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NUCLEAR FUELS, NUCLEAR SAFEGUARDS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976CARACA14499
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760462-0467
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761238/aaaabgpo.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 288881, 76 STATE 268344
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 AUG 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: WITHDRAWN <24 MAR 2004 by hartledg, REFER TO DOE>; RELEASED <16 AUG 2004 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <16 AUG 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VENEZUELAN REQUEST FOR ENRICHED URANIUM FUEL
TAGS: TECH, PARM, VE, IAEA, IVIC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006